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13 July 1961

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Comments on "A Study Regarding Berlin Prepared
in Response to NSC Directive No. 58 of June 13, 1961"

Soviet Estimate of Western Intentions Re Tactical
Nuclear Weapons

1. If Western military preparations were restricted to increases in conventional capability in Europe and strategic nuclear capability at home and elsewhere, the Soviets might be led to think that we had decided not to use tactical nuclear weapons in a Berlin crisis. This inference might in turn harden their approach, since they would calculate that they could overmatch our conventional capability and that we would not in fact use our strategic nuclear capability. This inference by the Soviets might be offset by occasional references to the fact that NATO's long-established policy includes the integration of tactical nuclear weapons.

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Timing of Future Soviet Moves

2. Khrushchev has publicly said that "a peaceful settlement in Europe must be attained this year" and that "the Soviet Union . . . will do everything to have [a peace treaty] signed by the end of the year." At the same time, in other recent speeches he has restated his position without referring to particular deadlines. In all these statements, he is seeking to retain the maximum tactical flexibility consistent with exerting pressure on us. This pressure is still designed to obtain early negotiations in which the West was prepared to make concessions.

3. It is of course necessary for us to establish certain dates for our own preparations. But it is very important that these preparations, insofar as possible, should not depend for their effect upon any very precise views about the likely timing of Soviet moves. It would be dangerous, for example, to think that 17 September or 1 December had any special significance in terms of expected Soviet actions. Most of all, it would be dangerous to think that the greatest point of challenge will be about one month after the signing of a separate treaty.

- 2 -

~~SECRET~~

4. The Soviets have recently hinted that, if the next Western response on Berlin is unresponsive to their demands, they would no longer wait till the end of 1961 but would commence unilateral action much sooner. The USSR might in fact do this if it concluded that the West was getting itself into a totally unyielding mood and had to be jarred, by a sudden heightening of pressures, before NATO-wide resolve was achieved.

5. On the whole, it seems more likely that Khrushchev will space out his moves in hopes of splitting the NATO partners and avoiding any single moment of challenge drastic enough to risk a Western military response. He has ample opportunities to vary his timing during the following periods:

- (a) the time between the issuance of formal invitations to a peace conference and its convocation;
- (b) the duration of the conference itself;
- (c) the time required for ratification, if he chooses to insert this formality;
- (d) the time, if any, between final ratification and entry into effect.

SECRET

6. Phase III in the paper suggests that a month might intervene between the coming into effect of a separate treaty and the turnover of access controls to East Germany. We think that formal turnover is likely to ensue immediately, in the sense that East Germans will replace Soviets at the checkpoints. At this point, according to the stated Soviet position, Allied access will be impossible without new agreements with the GDR. Depending on his estimate of likely Western reactions, however, Khrushchev may choose not to force the issue in this fashion, but rather to instruct the GDR to avoid complications by facilitating access under established procedures. Sooner or later the GDR, on Soviet instruction, could begin to hamper and constrict access in accordance with Moscow's view of what the traffic would bear.

7. Altogether, therefore, as pointed out in Tuesday's estimate, in the Berlin situation "the choice of timing and method remain, except perhaps in a full crisis, largely within [Soviet] control," and Khrushchev can, if he wishes, alternate between the tactics of negotiation and unilateral action for a very long time.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

ARMAND KENT
Chairman